

NEBRASKA TECHNICAL NOTE



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Gerald E. Jasmer
Wildlife Biologist

WETLAND WATER DEPTHS USED BY SELECTED WILDLIFE SPECIES AND GROUPS

Several new and established Conservation Practice standards contained in the Nebraska Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) can be utilized to create, restore, or improve habitat conditions for wetland and aquatic wildlife. Landowners and managers frequently ask "What is the best water depth for wildlife?" Since one species will utilize and seem to prefer water depths that another species will avoid, it is important to determine what species to manage for.

The attached table serves as a reference for making habitat management decisions. It is important to note that the depth shown are those used for foraging and that most species will utilize considerably deeper water during their migration and wintering activities. Also many species, such as geese, obtain food from uplands as well.

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Wetland Water Depths Used by Selected Wildlife Species and Groups¹

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Species	Water depth (in)	Species	Water depth (in)
HERONS		SHOREBIRDS	
Great Egret	0-20	Killdeer	0-1
Great Blue Heron	0-24	Solitary Sandpiper	0-2
American Bittern	3-5	Plover	0-2
SWANS	>10	Greater Yellowlegs	0-2
GEESE		Pectoral Sandpiper	0-2
Greater White-fronted Goose	0-4	Small Sandpiper	0-2
Snow Goose	0-4	Virginia Rail	0-4
Canada Goose	0-4	Medium Sandpiper	0-4
DUCKS		Curlew	0-7
Mallard	2-10	Sora	0-10
Blue-winged Teal	2-10	Lesser Yellowlegs	1-2
Green-winged Teal	2-10	Common Snipe	1-4
Wood Duck	2-10	Yellowlegs	1-5
Northern Pintail	2-10	Godwit	2-7
Cinnamon Teal	2-10	Phalarope	2-8
Northern Shoveler	2-10	Wilson's Phalarope	2-10
Gadwall	2-10	Avocet/Stilt	3-9
American Wigeon	>10	OTHER	
Canvasback	>10	Rails	2-12
Redhead	>10	American Coot	>8
Ring-necked Duck	>10	Grebes	>10
Ruddy Duck	>10	Amphibians	0-8
		Red-winged Blackbird	0-10
		Reptiles	0-20

Bibliography

Fredrickson, L.H., and F.A. Reid. "Wetland and Riparian Habitats: A Nongame Management Overview." Management of Nongame Wildlife in the Midwest: A Developing Art, J.B. Hale, L.B. Best, and R.L. Clawson, eds. The Wildlife Society, 1986.

Fredrickson, L.H., and T.S. Taylor. "Management of Seasonally Flooded Impoundments for Wildlife." Resource Publication 148. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1982.

Helmers, D.L. Shorebird Management Manual. Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, 1992.

¹ Water depths shown for birds are for foraging habitat. Breeding and brood rearing habitat water depths will generally be similar or deeper.

Rundle, W.D., and L.H. Fredrickson. "Managing Seasonally Flooded Impoundments for Migrant Rails and Shorebirds." The Wildlife Society Bulletin. Vol. 9, No. 2, Summer 1981.